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GLENWOOD SPRINGS, CO 81601 * Apr 25, 2016 * ad id: 12067791

**LEGAL NOTICE OF PROPOSED ACTION
 OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT**

USDA Forest Service

Aspen/Sopris, Dillon, and Eagle/Holy Cross Ranger Districts
 White River National Forest

XCEL Transmission Tower
 Vegetation Management Project

The White River National Forest is initiating scoping and asking for public comment on a proposal to implement fuel reduction treatments within 150 feet of electric power transmission support towers and associated structures operated by the Public Service Company of Colorado (PSCO), a subsidiary of Xcel Energy. The project area includes portions of the forest extending into Eagle, Pitkin, and Summit Counties in north central Colorado. The project area is comprised of an approximately 1.62 acre circular area around all transmission line support structures operated by PSCO on National Forest System lands across the forest, and consists of approximately 1,224 acres, which includes the existing utility right-of-way (ROW) upon which no treatment will occur under this project.

The purpose of this project is to manage the vegetation/fuel profile adjacent to power transmission support towers and associated support equipment to reduce incidence of electric power transmission failure due to wildfire. This project is needed in order to reduce the threat of wildfire on the power line infrastructure, which would better assure uninterrupted power to local customers and the national grid.

The proposed action is the management of the vegetation/fuel profile outside of established electric power transmission ROW on FS System Lands on the White River National Forest. The USFS expects that the application of the Proposed Action may occur on approximately 754 treatment zones (approximately 0.93 acres each) totaling approximately 700 acres. Vegetation management would consist of hand-held (i.e. chainsaw or similar) equipment treatment of tree species outside of the existing ROW but within 150 feet from support towers and associated support equipment. Vegetation treatment would consist of hand felling of live timber to leave between 30 and 40 percent canopy cover of tree species, along with felling of dead timber as needed to remove hazards and ladder fuels. Project work is expected to occur over the next five to ten years.

How To Comment and Time Frame

The proposed project is an activity implementing a land management plan and subject to the objection process described in 36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B. The Forest Service is combining scoping with the legal notice and opportunity to comment, as described in Å§218.24. The public is encouraged to provide specific written comments on this proposal, including supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider. Specific written comments should be within the scope of and have a direct relationship to the proposed action.

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this proposed action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of the this notice in the Glenwood Springs Post Independent. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period of this analysis. Those wishing to comment should not rely on dates or timeframe information provided by other sources.

All comments or inquiries concerning this proposal should be addressed to the Responsible Official: Scott Fitzwilliams, Forest Supervisor c/o Steve Goodson, Project Lead, 900 Grand Avenue, Glenwood Springs, Colorado 81601? or call (970) 945-3218. Comments may also be faxed to (970) 945-3266. Electronic comments may be sent to sgoodson@fs.fed.us. Comments may also be submitted electronically at: <https://cara.ecosystemmanagementorg/Public//CommentInput?Project=48834>. Oral and written comments can be submitted in person to the above address between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday, excluding federal holidays. Persons commenting should include: (1) name, address, telephone number, and organization represented, if any? (2) reference to the " XCEL Transmission Tower Vegetation Management" project? and (3) specific facts, concerns, or issues and supporting reasons why they should be considered.

For additional information, please contact Steve Goodson at the above phone, email, or address.

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